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The Islām Series

GENERAL EDITOR

The Rev. Canon Sell. D.D., M.A., A.S.

AL-KHULAFÁ AR-RĀSHIDŪN

OR

THE FOUR RIGHTLY-GUIDED KHALÍFAS

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" **AL-KHULAFÁ AR-RÁSHIDŪN**

OR

**THE FOUR RIGHTLY-GUIDED KHALÍFAS**

Sell, Edward.  
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BY

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'THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUR'ÁN' AND  
'THE RECENSIONS OF THE QUR'ÁN'



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## INTRODUCTION

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THE title al-Khulafá ar-Ráshidún, or the right-guided Khalífas, is given to the four who immediately succeeded Muḥammad,—Abú Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmán and ‘Alí. They were men of different characters and capacities and each in his own way exercised much influence on the early history of Islám.

The following is the system of transliteration used in this work:—

<u>th</u>	<i>for</i>	ث		t	<i>for</i>	ط
h	”	ح		z	”	ظ
<u>kh</u>	”	خ		‘	”	ع
<u>dh</u>	”	ذ		<u>gh</u>	”	غ
s	”	ص		q	”	ق
d	”	ض			”	ء

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# AL-KHULAFÁ AR-RÁSHIDŪN

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## ABŪ BAKR

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THE question whether Muḥammad appointed his successor is one on which there has been much difference of opinion amongst Muḥammadans. Syed 'Amir 'Alí says: 'There is abundant evidence to show that many a time Muḥammad had indicated 'Alí for the Vicegerency.'<sup>1</sup> This is the Shí'ah view of the case; but the Sunnis entirely reject this idea and the weight of historical evidence is on their side. The fact seems to be that Muḥammad formally appointed no successor.<sup>2</sup> Both Bukhári and Muslim, two of the highest authorities on the Traditions, record concerning his successor a saying of the Khalífá 'Umar: 'Were I to leave you without one, then verily he, who was greater than I, also left you so.' But during his last illness Muḥammad directed Abú Bakr to say the namáz, or public prayers, in the Mosque,

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<sup>1</sup> *Spirit of Islám*, p. 431.

<sup>2</sup> The authorities for this statement will be found in Jalálu'd-din's *History of the Khalifas* (Jarrett's translation), pp. 6—8.

and this is held by some authorities to have been a clear indication of his will in the matter. Some, on the other hand, think differently, and 'Alí is reported to have declined to appoint his successor by saying: 'The Apostle of God appointed none, shall I therefore do so?' There is, however, a tradition recorded by Tirmidhi, on the authority of 'Áyesha, that Muḥammad said: 'It is not expedient for a people, among whom is Abú Bakr, that any other than he should act as Imám.'

When the news of Muḥammad's death was announced the people could scarcely believe it, and so 'Umar gave expression to their feelings by saying to an excited audience that the Prophet was only in a trance and would soon recover. To one, who tried to convince him to the contrary, he said angrily; 'Thou liest, the Apostle of God is not dead . . . the Prophet of the Lord shall not die until he hath rooted out every unbeliever and infidel.' Abú Bakr then appeared and said to the people: 'Whoso worshippeth Muḥammad, let him know that Muḥammad is dead indeed; but whoso worshippeth God, let him know that God liveth and dieth 'not.' Then turning towards 'Umar he said: 'Silence, sit down, hath not the Almighty revealed the verse to the Prophet, "Thou truly shalt die and they too shall die"'?'<sup>1</sup> After the battle of Uhud this revelation also came:

Muḥammad is no more than an Apostle: other Apostles have already passed away before him. If he die, therefore, or be killed, will ye turn upon your heels?—Súratu 'Alí 'Imrán (iii) 138.

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<sup>1</sup> Súratu'z-Zamar (xxxix) 31.



Then 'Umar was satisfied and remained quiet. The news had already spread abroad in the city, and the Anṣár,<sup>1</sup> citizens of Madína, known as the Helpers, had already taken the preparatory steps to elect a chief. 'We have sheltered a nest of strangers,' they said, 'now we who have fought for the Faith must have a chief from amongst ourselves.' Had this been done, it would have caused a fatal division amongst the Muslims, for none but a member of the great Meccan tribe of the Quraish could hope to command the allegiance of the various sections of the Arab people. The proposal of the Anṣár was strongly opposed by the Muhájirún, by which name the men who fled from Mecca to Madína were known. They were Meccans and certainly would not have submitted to the rule of a man of Madína. On hearing this startling news, Abú Bakr, 'Umar, and Abú 'Ubaida, though warned of the personal risks they ran, hurried to the assembly; but did not arrive until an Anṣár, Sa'd ibn<sup>2</sup> 'Ubáda, had been suggested as a proper person for the Khalífate.<sup>3</sup> Abú Bakr at once pointed out that, for the sake of unity, the Khalífa must be one whom all the Muslims would accept as their ruler. The men of Madína suggested that there should be two, one to represent the Anṣár, the other the representative of the men of

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<sup>1</sup> The name given to the early converts from the men of Madína, who helped Muḥammad on his arrival there.

<sup>2</sup> Sa'd never got over his rejection. He retired to Syria where he was killed about five years later.

<sup>3</sup> A full account of the discussion which took place is given in the *Raudatu's-Safa*. Jalalu'd-din as-Syúfi also shows that the Khalífa must be a member of the Quraish tribe.

Mecca and of other parts. This roused the anger of 'Umar. He uttered hasty words and a tumult ensued. Abú Bakr intervened and, pointing to 'Umar and Abú 'Ubaida, who had come with him, said: 'choose between them and salute him as your chief.' This proposal did not approve itself to his two friends and in rejecting it they said to Abú Bakr: 'Nay, thou art our chief,' and made the sign of allegiance. Others then followed their example. The Anṣār seeing that their case was hopeless now acquiesced. The election was thus complete and a great danger was averted.

When the funeral of the Prophet was over, Abú Bakr ascended the pulpit and said to the congregation: 'O people! Now I am chief over you, albeit not the best among you. If I do well, support me; if ill, then set me right. Follow the true, wherein is faithfulness; reject the false, wherein is treachery. The weaker among you shall be as the stronger with me, until that I shall have redressed his wrong; and the stronger shall be as the weaker, until, if the Lord will, I shall have taken from him that which he hath wrested. Leave not off to fight in the ways of the Lord; whosoever leaveth off, him verily shall the Lord abase. Obey me, wherein I obey our Lord and His Prophet; when I disobey then disobey me. Arise to prayer and God be with you.'<sup>1</sup>

Amongst the small circle of intimate friends whom Muḥammad, at an early stage of his career, gathered

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Muir, *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, p. 5, see also Raudatu's-Safa (ed. R.A.S., London, 1893) part ii, vol. iii, p. 18.

round himself, Abú Bakr<sup>1</sup> was one of the chief and one of the most beloved. After the conversion of Khadíja to her husband's views, Abú Bakr may be regarded as the first convert to Islám. His daughter said that she could not remember the time when both her parents were not true believers and when Muḥammad did not daily visit their house. The readiness with which Abú Bakr accepted Islám is seen from the Prophet's statement, 'I never invited any to the Faith who displayed not hesitation and perplexity, excepting only Abú Bakr; who, when I had propounded Islám unto him, tarried not, neither was perplexed.'

Abú Bakr was a successful and a rich merchant. After his conversion, his generosity was such that he spent nearly all his fortune in purchasing slaves, who, from their inclination to, or acceptance of, Islám, had been persecuted by their pagan masters. In outward appearance Abú Bakr was a man of fair complexion, of slender build, with a slight stoop and short in stature. He was two years younger than Muḥammad. He was a man of intelligence, kindly in manner and disposition. His judgment was sound and the Prophet attached great weight to his opinion regarding any matter which had to be decided. When the flight to Madína was determined on, it was Abú Bakr who made all the necessary arrangements, purchased

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<sup>1</sup> His other names are aṣ-Ṣiddiq, the true: al-'Atiq, the liberated, so called, according to Mas'údi, because the Prophet announced that he would be preserved from the fire of hell. The name Abú Bakr means the father of the virgin, and may have been given to him because his daughter 'Áyesha was the only virgin wife of Muḥammad: the rest were widows.

the two swift camels, and provided the guide. He and Muḥammad together secretly left Mecca, and together they sought refuge in a cave from the pursuit of their enemies.<sup>1</sup>

Before the battle of Badr, Abú Bakr expressed his firm resolve to abide by the decision of the Prophet regarding it, and was with him on the day of conflict. At a critical period of the fight, Muḥammad said: 'Rejoice, O Abú Bakr, God has sent us aid.' According to the traditions Abú Bakr showed remarkable ability and courage in the protection of his master.<sup>2</sup> In this battle one of his sons fought on the side of the Meccans, but afterwards became a Muslim. When Muḥammad was about to start for the battle of 'Uḥud, it was Abú Bakr who retired with him into a chamber from which the Prophet issued forth clad in armour. After the defeat at 'Uḥud when Muḥammad, as a demonstration to show that he had not lost heart, determined to start in pursuit of the victorious Meccans, it was into the hands of Abú Bakr that a standard was placed. When Muḥammad captured the city of Mecca, Abú Bakr brought his aged father, Abú Qaḥáfa, into his presence. The Prophet received him kindly, and affectionately invited him to become a Muslim, which he did. He lived to see his son elected

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<sup>1</sup> This was afterwards referred to in the verse: 'If ye assist not your Prophet . . . . . God assisted him formerly, when the unbelievers drove him forth in company with a second only; when they two were in the cave.'—Súratu't-Tauba (ix) 40. 'A second only' is literally 'second of two,' or Tháníu'l-Aṭhnain, which became one of Abú Bakr's most honourable titles.

<sup>2</sup> As-Syúṭi, *History of the Khalifas*, p. 36.

Khalífa. ‘Abdu’lláh, a son of Abú Bakr, was so severely wounded whilst fighting at Tá’if on the Prophet’s side that he died. It was Abú Bakr who was placed in charge of the three hundred men who, in the year A.D. 631, made the pilgrimage to Mecca, where the famous verses of the ninth Súra<sup>1</sup> were read in the valley of Miná to a large audience of Meccan idolaters: verses which absolved Muḥammad, after the expiration of four months, from any obligation contracted, by treaty or otherwise, with the pagan Arabs. Henceforth, no idolater could approach the Ka’ba. During Muḥammad’s last illness Abú Bakr officiated for him as Imám, or leader, in the public prayers in the Mosque at Madína.

The Prophet died on June 8, A.D. 622. Abú Bakr had been his close companion from the very first. He had stood by him in peace and in war, in the early days when men scoffed at him, in the later ones when they were jealous of his growing power. He knew, as perhaps none other did, the mind of Muḥammad, to whom he had always been a trusted confidant. All this shows that the election of Abú Bakr to the Khalifate was a most wise and prudent proceeding. Such a man, gentle yet strong, with a profound respect for his deceased leader and a unique acquaintance with his plans; a man, with an absolute faith in the future prosperity of Islám, was admirably suited to control its destinies at this most critical period of its history. For it must be borne in mind that, though the new Faith was strong in

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<sup>1</sup> Súratu’t-Tauba, (ix) 1—7, 29.

Madína and in Mecca, its hold on the Arab tribes was very slight. Some of them were, at this very time, in revolt and the spirit of disaffection was spreading far and wide.

The Khalifa soon saw that physical force was necessary and said: 'Never did a people desist from warring in the cause of God, without God's delivering it over to shame.' Some tribes demanded exemption from the payment of the tithe. 'If ye withhold but the tether of a tithed camel,' said Abú Bakr, 'I will fight you for the same.' He would allow no compromise, no half-hearted service. One of the Prophet's latest utterance had been 'throughout Arabia there shall be no second creed.' To bring this about was the mission of Abú Bakr. Envoys were sent to all the apostate tribes, demanding instant submission, on pain of death to the men and captivity to the women and children.<sup>1</sup> It would be wearisome to follow out in detail all the smaller military expeditions, but those connected with Khálid bin Walíd, known as 'The Sword of God,' and the greatest of all the Arab commanders, deserve some notice. Khálid had been the main cause of the defeat of Muḥammad at the battle of 'Uḥud; but he soon after became a Muslim, as brave for the Faith as he had been against it.

Amongst the pretenders to the prophetic office, Ṭulaiḥa and Musailama were the chief. Jealousy of the citizens of Mecca and Madína had led many of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Umar said: 'I found him in this business more energetic and determined than myself.'—Syúṭi, *History of the Khalifas*, p. 73.

the Bedouins to follow them. 'A prophet of our own,' said the followers of the former, 'is better than a prophet of the Quraish; besides Muḥammad is dead, and Ṭulaiḥa is alive.' He, however, was soon defeated and became a Muslim. After this, several tribes submitted. It was now that Khálid did a very cruel act. Málik, the chief of a tribe, with his people gave themselves up, trusting that their lives would be spared.<sup>1</sup> They were all put to death. Khálid's defence was that with a view to protect them from cold, he had ordered the guards to *wrap up* their prisoners, that in their dialect (the Kinanite) this word meant *slay* and so the mistake occurred. Khálid's remark after the event was, 'when God willeth a thing, He bringeth it to pass.' This event caused much excitement, and 'Umar, who was no friend of Khálid, urged the Khalífa to degrade him. Málik was a man of much influence and a poet of some fame, and so the men of Madína were shocked at his unmerited death. Khálid did a further wrong in marrying Laila, the beautiful widow of Málik, immediately after the battle. The Khalífa, knowing the value of Khálid as a warrior, refused to degrade him for putting Málik to death and merely rebuked him for wedding his victim's widow.<sup>2</sup> He said to

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<sup>1</sup> Raudatu's-Ṣafa, part ii, vol. iii, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> The marriage with a widow, who has not kept her 'iddut, or period of probation, is not lawful (Baillie's *Imamea*, p. 160: Syed Amír 'Alí's *Personal Law of the Muḥammadans*, p. 257); but apparently the Prophet's own conduct in marrying Ṣafíyya, immediately after the battle of Khaibar (Muir, *Life of Mohamet*, vol. iv, p. 19), set a precedent.

him, 'thou hast killed a Muslim and married his widow.' Khálid replied: 'O Khalífa of the Apostle of Alláh. I adjure thee by God whether thou hast heard the Prophet say, "Khálid is the sword of God."' Abú Bakr replied in the affirmative. Khálid continued, 'The sword of God strikes only unbelievers and hypocrites.' 'Return then to thy work,' said Abú Bakr.<sup>1</sup>

The opposition of Musailama was more prolonged than that of Tulaiha and of more importance. In the life-time of the Prophet, Musailama had advanced claims to prophetship and to equal rights with Muḥammad. He now raised an armed rebellion against Abú Bakr. The Khalífa appointed Khálid to the command of the army and a fierce battle was fought at Yamana. It was a very critical time. The flower of the Muslim troops were engaged, and victory was essential to the consolidation of Abú Bakr's authority and to the firm establishment of Islám. Khálid lost nearly seven hundred men, and the carnage on the other side was greater still. Musailama himself was slain and the rebellion was stayed, but at a heavy cost. Many of the Companions<sup>2</sup> lost their lives and in many a Madína home the mourning was great. So many of the Qur'án readers, men who knew the Qur'án by heart, were killed that it led Abú Bakr to conceive of the idea of collecting the text lest 'any part should be lost therefrom.'<sup>3</sup>

Rebellions in the east and south of Arabia now began to spread. Many fights took place and much

<sup>1</sup> *Raḍdatu's-Ṣafá*, part ii, vol. iii, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., Aṣḥáb, men who had personally associated with Muḥammad.

<sup>3</sup> Sell, *Essays on Islám*, p. 219.



blood was shed before peace was secured. Still the old tribal jealousies remained, though suppressed for a while by the vigour of the Khalífa's rule and the prowess of his victorious forces. But no authority other than that of his tribal chief had any lasting hold on a Bedouin, and a Khalífa at Madína could never hope to have any permanent control over such unruly natures. Even Islám did not at this stage form a sufficiently strong connecting link. Some common ground of action, some common enemy, some constant state of war with hope of plunder was needed. This consolidating force was found in foreign warfare. The idea of the universality of Islám had not found its full development in the life-time of Muḥammad. Indeed, he at first, at least, looked only to the union of the Arab people in one faith and polity; but with increasing power at home, the prospect of influence abroad became brighter, and so we find Abú Bakr in his first speech, saying: 'When a people leaveth off to fight in the name of the Lord, the Lord casteth off that people.' The world for Islám now became the dominant idea. The Arabs as conquerors over all were to become the lords of men, the subject races an inferior class. Divisions many and great afterwards arose from political and religious causes, but, for the time, tribal jealousies were set aside and all the Muslims united in the great work of defying and conquering the unbelieving nations. Thus it was that Abú Bakr soon found himself in conflict with the two great Powers of the East and the West—Persia and Byzantium. The expedition against the former was entrusted to

Khálid, whose forces, thinned by the losses at Yamana, were now augmented by large bodies of Bedouins. The Persians were easily defeated in their first battle, called the 'battle of chains,' from the report that the Persian soldiers were chained together to prevent their running away. Two other victories followed and the Muslim army gained a rich booty. Khálid in a stirring address to his men said: 'Were it but a provision for this present life and no holy war to wage, it were worth our while to fight for these fair fields and to banish care and penury for ever.' The result of these and of a succeeding victory was that all the region in the deltas of the Tigris and Euphrates was subjected. The power of the Persian Empire was broken and the way for its complete conquest soon after was now prepared.

Meanwhile affairs in Syria had not gone on so prosperously. The army there was under the command of Khálid bin Sa'íd who was one of the earliest converts to Islám, but had no special aptitude for command in a warlike expedition. One of his chief captains was Amr bin al-'As, a warrior of some renown. The Muslims were defeated by the Romans at a place not far from the sea of Tiberias. On hearing this, Abú Bakr at once hurried up forces from the south, now happily for him subjugated and quiet. Amongst these troops were men of tried valour, including one hundred who had fought in the memorable battle at Badr. Over thirty-six thousand men set out. The Khalífa, who now realized the full gravity of a conflict with the Roman Emperor,

Heraclius, made a stirring speech to this army of reinforcement. Two months, however, passed in indecisive skirmishing. Abú Bakr grew anxious and lost faith in the commanders of the Syrian army. He determined to summon Khálid bin Walíd, the ever-victorious general. 'By him,' he said, 'with the help of the Lord, shall the machinations of Satan and of the Romans be overthrown.' The desert lay between Khálid bin Walíd and the army he was called upon to command; but by an extraordinary and rapid march he arrived in time to avert defeat and to gain a complete victory at the battle of Wacusa in September, A.D. 634. The loss on both sides was very great; but the power of the Muslims was now practically established in Syria.

Abú Bakr died on August 22, A.D. 634, a few weeks before the repulse of the Romans. His short reign of two years had seen a complete change in the attitude of Islám to the surrounding nations. With a firm hand he had put down rebellions in Arabia; with great judgment and foresight he had directed the warlike spirit of the Bedouins from internal tumults to external wars, and thus exalted that spirit of enterprise which led to rapid and extensive conquests. The Arab pretenders had been overthrown and the warlike warriors of the Arabian desert went forth to conquer and destroy. The desire to plunder a world stilled for a while the deep animosity of tribal feuds. The new creed thus did what Muḥammad had intended it to do, it united Arabia. This unity lasted with more or less binding force till the time of immediate and rapid conquest passed away, when even Islám failed

But, as to him who is covetous and bent in riches,  
 And calleth the good a lie,  
 To him will We make easy the path to misery,  
 And what shall his wealth avail him when he goeth down?

—Súratu'l-Lail (xcii) 1—11.

refer to Abú Bakr and to Abú Jahl, or 'Umayya bin Khaf; the one generous and faithful; the other self-seeking and rebellious.

The words, naming as among the protectors of the Prophet,

Every just man among the faithful—Súratu't-Tahrím (lxvi) 4, are said to have a direct reference to Abú Bakr and his long and faithful attachment to Muḥammad.

There are other passages referred to by the Muslim historians, but the allusions are obscure.

One of the most important acts of Abú Bakr, was the collection of the Qur'án, which, though done imperfectly, prepared the way for the more complete and important recension by the Khálifa 'Uthmán some years after. As we have already seen, many Qur'án readers were slain in the battle of Yamana, and Abú Bakr was anxious lest the knowledge of much that had been revealed should be lost. Zaid, to whom that work was entrusted, relates a conversation he had with Abú Bakr and 'Umar on the subject and adds: 'By Alláh, had he (Abú Bakr) charged me with the carrying away of a hill from among the mountains, it would not have been weightier upon me than that which he commanded me in the collection of the Qur'án.' It was collected from 'scraps of paper, and shoulder-blades,<sup>1</sup> and leafless palm-branches and the minds of

<sup>1</sup> Some authorities say 'thin whitish stones.'

men.' The copy thus made remained with Abú Bakr and, after his death, was kept by 'Umar who bequeathed it to his daughter Ḥafaṣa.

Abú Bakr is said to have narrated one hundred and forty-two sayings of the Prophet. Jalálu'd-din as-Syúṭi gives one hundred and four of these in his 'History of the Khalífas' but none of them call for any comment here. Islám owes much to Abú Bakr, to whose great personal influence and wise administrative actions is due the fact that it survived the difficulties which so early beset it, and which seemed, at one time, as if they would ruin it at the very outset of its career.

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## 'UMAR

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A SHORT time before his death, Abú Bakr nominated 'Umar to the Khalífate and the choice was a wise one, for he was a strong man with a reputation for just dealings with others. His habits of life were simple and the people could always find ready access to him. He did a great deal in organizing the administration of the growing Empire.

'Umar, when twenty-six years of age, became a convert to Islám, in the sixth year of Muḥammad's mission. He had been a very fierce opponent of the new teaching. When he heard that his sister and her husband had become followers of the Prophet, he became so angry that he beat his sister, and it was only when he saw her face covered with blood that he relented and listened to her earnest appeal that, at least, he should examine into the claims of the religion he so disliked. This led him to read the portion of the Qur'án, now known as the Súratu Tá Há (xx). On coming to the fourteenth verse:—

Verily I am God: there is no God but me: therefore worship me and observe prayer for a remembrance of me.

he said: ‘Lead me to Muḥammad, that I may make known to him my conversion.’ The Prophet reproached him with his bitter opposition, but on hearing ‘Umar say: ‘Verily, I testify that thou art the Prophet of God,’ was filled with joy. This conversion was a great gain to Islām, for ‘Umar was a man strong in body and in mind and of great personal influence in Mecca. After this, it was no longer necessary for the Muslims to conceal their faith, and so they made an open profession of it. The vigour and strength of character which ‘Umar had shown against Islām he now exerted on its behalf. He was one of the earliest Muhájirún, and was with the Apostle in all his wārlike expeditions. It was ‘Umar who urged upon him the advance to Badr, and when, after the battle, Abú Bakr pleaded for mercy on the prisoners, he urged Muḥammad to put them all to death. In the year A.D. 624, he gave his widowed daughter to Muḥammad as a wife, thus adding the tie of relationship to the bond existing between himself and his great leader. When the Jewish tribe, the Bani Nadhír, was exiled, it was ‘Umar who received a valuable portion of the property thus left behind. When Muḥammad made the pilgrimage to Mecca, he first sent ‘Umar to the Ka’ba to destroy the idols and the pictures that were therein. When the scandal about the Prophet’s intercourse with Mary, the Coptic maid, arose, ‘Umar, feeling hurt at the neglect of his daughter, showed his annoyance. This led the Prophet to reconsider his position. He said that Gabriel had spoken to him in praise of his wife Hafaṣa, ‘Umar’s daughter, and so

he took her back again. All this shows how intimate he was with Muḥammad, how important his influence was, how firm, even to severity, his attachment to the cause of Islām gradually became. Abú Bakr brought the unruly Arab tribes under control and consolidated his power within Arabia. 'Umar carried the victorious armies of Islām into Syria, Persia and Egypt, countries over which it rules to this day. The story of these events we now proceed to relate.

One of the first acts of the new Khalífa was to supersede Khálid, to whom he had never been friendly, and to place the army of Syria under the command of Abú 'Ubaida. The new commander, however, knew Khálid's value as a soldier and begged him to retain command over a portion of the army. This he magnanimously consented to do and rendered valuable service. The army now advanced towards Damascus, which was invested in December A.D. 634. The siege lasted a considerable time. According to Tabari it was seventy days; according to Waqidi six months. The city was taken at last by storm. The Governor, seeing that resistance was hopeless, capitulated on favourable terms. Khálid in ignorance of this had commenced a great slaughter in the quarter his men attacked. Indéed it was only the firmness of Abú 'Ubaida which saved the whole population from destruction. One-half of the wealth of the city passed to the conquerors, and a tax was levied on the inhabitants who did not become Muslims. The churches were divided, one-half being given to the Muslims, the other half being left to the Christians. The Cathedral was arranged in two parts. In one Christian worship was still carried on, in the



other that of Islám was conducted. This curious arrangement was continued for about fifty years, when the Christian congregation was ejected and the whole building was used for Muḥammadan worship. All that was specially Christian in the ornaments and decoration of the Church was now removed; but over the lintel of a door,<sup>1</sup> long since closed, words, which still remain, were left untouched, a silent prophecy of what Damascus will yet see. The verse is taken from the Septuagint version of Psalm cxlv. 13, with the addition of the words ‘O Christ.’ It reads thus: ‘Thy Kingdom, O Christ, is a kingdom of all ages; and thy dominion is from generation to generation.’ For twelve centuries and more the sound of Christian worship has not been heard in what was once the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist; but on its walls still remains this striking testimony to the faith of the early Christians in the permanence of the Kingdom of Christ. Tiberias, Antioch and other towns soon surrendered and in a short time Syria became subject to the Khalífa. The conquest was comparatively easy, for neither Bedouins, Jews or Samaritans were very keen to support the Byzantine rule. The Bedouins, for the most part, embraced Islám: the people of the towns generally remained true to their own religion and so became Dhimmís<sup>2</sup> and paid a poll-tax. The Khalífa treated

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<sup>1</sup> This was the south door of the Church of St. John and was ‘doubtless the gate of entrance used by Muslims and Christians alike.’—Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, p. 231.

<sup>2</sup> A Dhimmí is a non-Muslim subject of a Muḥammadan State, who is allowed to exist under certain conditions, one of which is that he pays the *jizya*, or poll-tax.

them with kindness, such as in after ages Dhimmis did not experience. He allowed them to keep a number of their churches and to conduct their usual worship; but politically they ceased to have any status or power.

The invasion of Palestine followed the conquest of Syria and garrison after garrison yielded to the victorious Muslim army, until at last only Jerusalem was left. The Roman commander, dreading the onset of the Arabs, withdrew to Egypt. The Patriarch being thus left defenceless sued for peace, stipulating that 'Umar in person should receive the capitulation of the city. The Khalifa consented to this arrangement, set out from Madīna, crossed the Jordan below the lake of Tiberias and proceeded to Jerusalem. He was received by Sophronius the Patriarch, and the people on surrendering received the same terms as those of other cities. The Khalifa and the Patriarch then went through the city in company. 'Umar granted the Christians the use of their churches and laid the foundation of the Mosque which still bears his name. Thus, in the short space of three years, Syria and Palestine were lost to Christian rule. The resistance of the Roman power had been weak. Sectarian jealousy divided the people and there was no patriotic feeling amongst them.

The war with the Persians was a much more serious affair. Yezdegird, a youth of twenty-one years of age, was now placed on the throne and round him the people rallied. 'Umar heard the news with calmness, and swore that he would smite the princes of Persia with the sword of the princes of Arabia. In the large army

which he at once mobilized there were fourteen hundred Companions and ninety-nine of the men who had fought at Badr. The Persian army was one hundred and twenty thousand strong. Seventy elephants each carrying twenty men were in its ranks. After some delay the great battle of Qádisiya was fought in November A.D. 635. Before the action commenced the Muslim troops were drawn up and, at the head of each column, the Súratu'l-Anfál (viii), the Súra called ‘the Spoils,’ was read.<sup>1</sup> A few of the verses are:—

O ye who believe! when ye meet the marshalled hosts of the infidels, turn not your backs to them;

Whoso shall turn his back to them on that day, unless he turn aside to fight, or to rally to some other troop, shall incur wrath from God, Hell shall be his abode and wretched the journey thither! 15—16.

Say to the infidels: if they desist from their unbelief, what is now past shall be forgiven them; but, if they return to it, they have already before them the doom of the ancients!

Fight then against them till strife be at an end and the religion be all of it God's. 39—40.

Believers! when ye confront a troop, stand firm and make frequent mention of the name of God that it may fare well with you. 47.

O Prophet! stir up the faithful to the fight. Twenty of you who stand firm shall vanquish two hundred. 66.

With these stirring words of exhortation and encouragement the Muslims went to the field of action with brave hearts and determined courage. For three days the battle raged, and it was not until the morning of the fourth day that the Persians retired from the field and the Muslims could claim a victory. It cost them dear for they lost over eight thousand men. The spoil

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<sup>1</sup> This Súra was produced by the Prophet after the battle of Badr in order to settle the dispute about the spoil.

gained was enormous. Though the Persian Empire lasted a little while longer it never survived the great defeat by which its fate was practically decided. A few years before Persia had been able to withstand with success the whole force of the Byzantine Empire and now, within the short space of three years, it fell before a horde of Arab warriors. It was due to the fact that with many in the Persian armies there was lukewarmness and indifference; whilst in the Muslim there was fanatic energy fanned by religious zeal and excited by love of plunder. The next year an advance was made and the royal city of Medain, not far from Baghdád, was taken and booty rich beyond all conception was gained. After this, 'Umar, with the caution characteristic of his nature, refused to allow any further forward march. He said: 'The fruitful plains of 'Irâq suffice for all our wants.' The Khalifate had now grown rapidly and extensively, and 'Umar wisely sought to consolidate what was already gained.

One of the first acts of the conquerors was to found the cities of Bašra and of Kúfa, which soon became very populous centres. In after years they were famed as seats of learning and notorious for feuds and factions. Under weak Khalifas the turbulent and sectarian spirit engendered in these cities wrought much evil and eventually broke up the unity of Islám. Meanwhile they helped to consolidate the conquests already made. Yezdegird retired farther into his dominions, and in A.D. 641, raised another great army with the hope of driving off the Arabs; but it was too late, for by this time they had firmly established their rule in the portion of the country they occupied. A severe battle

was fought in A.D. 642 at Nehavend, in which the Persians were hopelessly beaten by a force not more than one-fifth of their number. After a few more ineffectual efforts Yezdegird gave up the contest, retired beyond the river Oxus and died a miserable death in A.D. 651. All the Persian provinces were then annexed and, though petty rebellions broke out from time to time, Persia ceased to be a separate nation. The majority of the people became Muḥammadans.

Meanwhile, another army was operating in Egypt. ‘Amr bin’l-‘Ās, one of the chief generals in the army which occupied Syria, persuaded the Khalifa to allow him to invade Egypt. ‘Umar did so with much reluctance and only on the condition that, if recalled, ‘Amr should return at once. He was recalled, but as he had crossed the frontier before he opened the letter he disobeyed his orders and went on. Alexandria was then a rich and flourishing city, very similar in its social life to Constantinople. The people in the rural districts were, however, poor and oppressed, and ‘Amr found willing helpers in them for ‘Lower Egypt was split into two camps, one party siding with the Romans, whilst the other wished to join the invaders’<sup>1</sup> The official clergy of the orthodox church were not friendly towards the Copt clergy, who were Jacobites; and so some of them were not displeased at the Muslim invasion; but ‘that Egypt fell without a blow’ and that ‘the Egyptians hailed the invaders as deliverers’ are described by Butler as ‘current fallacies.’<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, p. 285.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

Arabs had only to do with the people of the cities and, after repulsing a few attempts to stay their progress and after taking the city of Miṣr, they found themselves before Alexandria. The Governor of the city offered to capitulate and eventually did so on terms accepted by the Khalifa. The usual poll-tax was to be paid, prisoners already in Arabia were detained there, other prisoners were allowed to return. Some accepted Islām. This was in the year A.D. 641. The story of the destruction of the Alexandrian library is not mentioned by any writer before the thirteenth century and may be looked upon as a romance.<sup>1</sup> The Khalifa objected to 'Amr's making Alexandria his capital, for from a military point of view it was not a safe one. An inundation of the Nile might easily cut off all communication between it and Madína. Indeed so anxious was the Khalifa 'Umar to avoid the formation of a separate Muslim Colony in Egypt that he would not allow the soldiers to acquire any land there, lest they should settle down outside of Arabia to a quiet domestic life. He wished the army to be one of occupation only and to be always in a mobile condition. So 'Amr had to retire to his original camp, where he laid the foundations of the city al-Fustát,<sup>2</sup> which remained the Muḥammadan capital for more than three hundred years. Thus Egypt became a province of the Khalífate.

Against the general toleration of 'Umar's rule must

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Lane-Poole, *History of Egypt*, p. 12. The subject is fully discussed by Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, chapter xxv.

<sup>2</sup> Fustát means a tent and it is said that when 'Amr set out to invest Alexandria he would not allow his tent to be moved, lest the doves, now building their nests there, should be disturbed. Butler, p. 27.

be set the expulsion of the Christians and the Jews from Arabia. The Christians of Najrán had concluded a treaty with Muḥammad and Abú Bakr renewed it; but they declined to accept Islám, now pressed upon them, and so in accordance with the present accepted principle, 'in Arabia there shall be but one religion,' they had to go. The Jews of Khaibar had not so strong a claim, but their expulsion was unjust.

In further development of the principle that the Arabs were the lords of all, 'Umar took a politic step. The booty taken by the army was immense and new sources of revenue were found in land and in poll-taxes. 'Umar proceeded to regulate the distribution of all this wealth. Claims were met in the following order: 'priority of conversion, affinity to the Prophet, military service. The widows of the Prophet as "Mothers of the Faithful" took precedence.'<sup>1</sup> The men of Badr received a large share and women and children were not excluded from the general distribution. But 'priority of faith, not distinction of noble birth' was the rule invariably observed, and thus all jealousy which might have arisen from tribal and family claims was avoided. The whole nation was thus subsidized and wars of aggression had a clear commercial value. To carry out this plan it was necessary to have an accurate register of the people. This was well made. The Khalifa also carried out irrigation works, made a good land assessment and generally formed a civil administration which at the time worked very well. Still the seeds of decay were being sown. The patriarchal

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<sup>1</sup> Muir, *Early Caliphate*, p. 225.

system could not continue, the system of law was not flexible enough and led in time to one so rigid that, even to this day, a land under Muslim rule is unprogressive and backward. The social system was bad. The Arab when not engaged in war was indolent. Slaves, captives in war, were numerous, and the female ones could be taken for concubines with a liberal hand. This freedom, and the practice of a legalized polygamy, caused the relation between the sexes to deteriorate. The consequence was that life became more licentious, and drunkenness, though sternly punished by the Khalífa, increased. Considering the age in which they lived and the circumstances in which their lot was cast, both Abú Bakr and ‘Umar<sup>1</sup> were men of high character.

The end of ‘Umar’s reign of about eleven years was now drawing near. He met his death at the hand of an assassin, Fírúz Abú Lú’lú’, a Persian slave who, brooding over his lot, complained to ‘Umar about his master and sought for justice, but the Khalífa declined to interfere in the dispute.<sup>2</sup> ‘Umar was acting as Imám in the Mosque, when Abú Lú’lú’ stabbed him in six places and inflicted mortal wounds. He was buried, at his own request, by the side of the Prophet and of Abú Bakr.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Umar married four wives before the Hijra, but only two followed him to Mecca. He afterwards married five more, of whom he divorced one. This was, compared with some of the heroes of Islám, moderate.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Umar had forbidden strangers to reside in Madína, but Múghaira bin Sha’ba, the master of this slave, a clever carpenter and blacksmith, obtained permission to keep him in the city.—Mas’údi, *Muráju’ dh-Dhābāb*, vol. iv, p. 226.



Thus passed away one of the greatest of the early Khalífas. In ten years he had seen the Khalífate extend far beyond the boundaries of Arabia. Fertile lands and rich cities had been added to it. Conquered peoples had entered into Islám, or paid tribute to it. The revenue was rich beyond conception, the martial ardour of the people was great, and the prospects of still further extension and increased wealth were very bright. In spite of a few weaknesses, here and there, ‘Umar was a strong ruler. In Madína he used to inflict punishment with his own hand, and ‘‘Umar’s whip is more terrible than the sword of another’’ was a common saying. He was the first to assume the title Amíru’l-Múminín—Commander of the Faithful. He adopted the Hijra, the year of the flight from Mecca, A.D. 622, as the date of the Muḥammadan era.<sup>1</sup> The traditions regarding his excellence are very numerous.<sup>2</sup> Abú Bakr called him the best of men and ‘Alí spoke of him as a righteous one. He lived very simply, wore coarse garments, and was most attentive to his religious duties.

It is said that many verses of the Qur’án were revealed, confirming and approving of statements made by ‘Umar. He said: ‘I was in accordance with my Lord in three things. I said: ‘O Apostle of God, if we were to take the station of Abraham for a place of prayer,’ and the verse was revealed:—

Take ye the station of Abraham for a place of prayer.—

Súratu Áli ‘Imrán (iii) 119.

<sup>1</sup> Jalálu’d-dín As-Syúti, *History of the Khalífas*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> They are given by Jalálu’d-dín, p. 122.

The wives of the Prophet were assembled in indignation,<sup>1</sup> and I said: 'If he divorce you, his Lord can easily give him in exchange better wives than you.' Then was this verse revealed:—

Haply, if he put you away, his Lord will give him in exchange other wives better than you.—*Sûratu't-Tahrîm* (lxvi) 5.

'I was also in accord with him regarding the prisoners at Badr.' When Muḥammad was asking pardon for a faction, 'Umar said: 'it shall be equal to them.' Then this verse was revealed:—

Alike shall it be to them, whether thou ask pardon for them, or ask it not.—*Sûratu'l-Munâfiqûn* (lxiii) 6.

Jalálu'd-dîn as-Syûṭî gives many other cases;<sup>2</sup> but they are probably the invention of admirers of the Khalîfa.

The Traditionists record many miracles wrought by 'Umar; but they lie outside the limit of serious history. The sayings regarding his habits are probably correct. They all represent him as a man of a simple mode of life, anxious to avoid even the appearance of luxury, generous in his gifts, in sympathy with the wishes and wants of his people, over-burdened at times with the affairs of state; but strict in religious duties himself and in exacting the outward performance of them in others. It is almost impossible to accord the proper historical value to Muslim traditions. Many of them are quite worthless; but the general result of their testimony seems to be, on the whole, correct, and we may admit that, for the time in which he lived and

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<sup>1</sup> About the affair of Mary the Copt.

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Khalîfas*, pp. 125-8.

for the work he had to do, the Khalífa 'Umar, viewed from a Muslim standpoint, was a man who rightly called forth respect. He was a worthy successor to Abú Bakr, and Islám owes much to these men, the first two of the Khulafá ar-Ráshidún.

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## ‘UTHMAN

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THE Khalífa ‘Umar nominated no successor and, when the prospect of death was close upon him, had to consider the question. All he could then do was to nominate six Companions, to whom the choice of a successor could be left. In case of a disagreement ‘Abdu’r-Raḥmán was to be the umpire and decide the matter. The competition lay between ‘Alí, nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet, and ‘Uṭhṁán bin ‘Affán, who had married two of Muḥammad’s daughters. He was the elder of the two and had been a distinguished Muslim. The selection was not an easy one and two whole days were spent in disputes over it. On the third day, when the nomination had to be announced in the Mosque, there was great excitement, and angry words were spoken by the supporters of the rival candidates. In the end ‘Uṭhṁán, much to the disappointment of ‘Alí and his friends, was appointed Khalífa on November 7, A.D. 644. The responsibility of the choice really fell on ‘Abdu’r-Raḥmán, who could not, however, foresee the result. It was, as matters turned out, a bad choice, for it led as we shall see to strife throughout the Muslim world and sowed the seeds of hatred, the fruit of which is seen to this day.

Amongst five of the earliest converts won to Islám by the zeal of Abú Bakr was 'Uthmán, then between thirty and forty years of age. His uncle, angry at his conversion, persecuted him severely and said: 'Dost thou prefer a new religion to that of thy fathers? I swear I will not loose thee until thou givest up the new faith.' 'Uthmán replied: 'By the Lord, I will never abandon it;' and he did not. He married Ruqaiya the daughter of Muḥammad. She died when her father was at the battle of Badr. During a bitter persecution by the Quraish of Muḥammad and his early disciples, it was deemed expedient that some of them should emigrate; so 'Uthmán, his wife and others went for a while to Abyssinia. The conversion of 'Umar which followed shortly after brought about, for a time at least, a better feeling between the Muslims and the Quraish. 'Uthmán must thus have found it safe to return to Mecca, for he was there at the time of the flight to Madína in A.D. 622, and was himself one of the fugitives (Muhájirún). After the death of his first wife he married her sister, Ummu Kulthúm, who died in the ninth year of the Hijra. These marriages with two daughters of the Prophet were looked upon as a great mark of distinction and 'Uthmán was called the 'Possessor of the two Luminaries.' At Muḥammad's first attempt after residing in Madína to enter Mecca the Quraish were alarmed and forbade his entry into the city. 'Uthmán was then selected to open up negotiations. To his request that the Muslims might be allowed to visit the Ka'ba, the Quraish replied that he might do so, but that they had sworn that Muḥammad should not

make the pilgrimage that year. Meanwhile a report was spread abroad in the Muslim camp that 'Uthmán had been slain in Mecca. The Prophet, standing under a tree, took an oath of fealty from his followers and then pledged himself to stand by his son-in-law. This oath is called the 'pledge of the tree' and is referred to in the verse:—

Well pleased now hath God been with the believers when they plighted fealty under the tree.—*Suratu'l-Fath* (xlviii) 18.

When, in the ninth year of the Hijra, many hesitated about joining the expedition against the Romans on the Syrian frontier, 'Uthmán, being among the more ardent and enthusiastic men of the community, contributed one thousand dinars to the funds raised for it. On some occasions when Muḥammad was absent on warlike expeditions, the city of Madína was placed under the charge of 'Uthmán. He was a man of middle stature, stout of limb and fair of countenance. In the opinion of Muḥammad he and Ruqaiya made a 'comely pair.'

It is thus clear that 'Uthmán had possessed the confidence and affection of the Prophet; but still his election to the *Khalifate* was a misfortune. Already a fierce spirit of jealousy had arisen between the house of Hāshim and the house of Umayyah, both descendants of the famous Koshai. The Prophet and 'Alí also were descendants of Hāshim: 'Uthmán was descended from Umayyah. Two distinct parties were now formed: the Companions of the Prophet and the men of Madína on the one side; the descendants of Umayyah and the Quraish—now all Muslim—on

the other. In Mecca Muḥammad's most active enemy had been Abú Sufyán, the commander of the opposing army both at Badr and at Uhud. He belonged to the Umaiya family and now his son Mu'áwiya held a high post in Syria. It is true that he had been appointed by 'Umar, but the opposite party resented it all the same.

The Khalifas Abú Bakr and 'Umar had, with a firm hand and strong will, kept these rival parties in check; but 'Uthmán, himself a member of the family of Umaiya, entirely failed to do so. He soon began to show his partiality by giving appointments to his own friends, men who were connected with that portion of the Meccan community that had been late in espousing the cause of Muḥammad. Of some of them, such as Abú Sufyán, the Prophet had spoken in terms of disparagement. All these remarks were now called to mind and repeated.

At first the evil of this disunion in feeling was not so apparent, for war diverted the attention of all. The conquest of Persia was now made complete. In Syria an attack of the Byzantines was so successfully met that the armies of Islám advanced as far as the shores of the Black Sea. In Africa the Muslims in Egypt advanced along the coast westward beyond Tripoli and threatened Carthage. Cyprus was taken and the Muslims were now not only able to meet their foes at sea but to beat them. The first naval victory they gained was off Alexandria in A.D. 652. The Khalífa 'Umar had strongly opposed the creation of a navy. He said: 'Man at sea is like an insect floating on a splinter, now engulfed, now scared to

death.' 'Uthmán reversed his predecessor's order, but made service at sea voluntary.

In connexion with Egypt the Khalífa showed much weakness. 'Amr had been a capable commander and administrator there; but 'Uthmán without any valid reason took away the civil government from him and left him the military command alone. He then appointed his own foster-brother Abú Sarḥ as Governor of Egypt. 'Amr said: 'To be over the army but not over the revenue is but holding the cow's horns whilst another milks her,' and so he departed and joined the party of the disaffected. In another quarter trouble was arising. The turbulent spirit of the people of Kúfa and of Baṣra began to show itself. The Khalífa showed great weakness and much indiscretion in the way in which he deposed governors and dealt leniently with the faults of his own nominees. So many members of his own party were advanced to positions of distinction and with such rapidity that people said that one Quraish succeeded another and that the last was no better than the first. The men of Madína, who had won fame in many a battlefield, were superseded, and their rivals of Mecca who themselves, or their fathers, had been late in choosing Islám were put in their places. Thus the spirit of dissatisfaction grew and the feeling of disaffection was deepened.

With all these political blunders the Khalífa unwisely departed from the simple mode of life which the Muḥammadan leaders had hitherto adopted. The enormous wealth gained in recent wars was lavishly spent. 'Uthmán built for himself a fine palace at



Madīna, and the chief men, following his example, began to erect houses of marble and of stone.<sup>1</sup> The simple austere manners of the days of Abú Bakr and of ‘Umar gave way to a luxurious mode of life. Amongst the young there was a wild reckless spirit and the Khalifa’s own nephew started a gaming club. The men appointed to positions of authority in the provinces excited the same spirit there, and Damascus became a city famed for its frivolity.<sup>2</sup> Complaints were constantly made, but the favourites who were with the Khalifa prevented any attention being paid to them. The rumour spread that the Khalifa was not orthodox. He made an innovation in the ceremonies of the pilgrimage. In a certain prayer in which the Prophet had made two prostrations (rak‘at) he made four! Then came the recension of the Qur‘án.<sup>3</sup> It was time something was done, if hopeless confusion was to be avoided. Abú Bakr had made a beginning; but his recension did not prevent the continued growth of what seemed likely to be an indefinite number of ‘various readings.’ But by this time Kúfa and Baṣra had their schools of theology and their divinity professors. Baṣra held by the ‘readings’ of Abú Musá; Kúfa by those of ibn Mas‘úd. Both could not be satisfied and so when a text was compiled, satisfactory to the general body of the Muslims, the men of Kúfa protested against it and charged the Khalifa

<sup>1</sup> The names of the men and a description of the fine houses they built is given by the Arab historian, Mas‘údí. See *Murúju’dh-Dhahab* (ed. Paris 1861) vol. iv, pp. 253—5.

<sup>2</sup> For a full, though not an unbiassed, account of the social life of the period, see *History of the Saracens* by Syed Amír ‘Alí, pp. 65—69.

<sup>3</sup> For a full account of this, see *Recensions of the Qur‘án*, C. L. S.

with sacrilege for burning up all existing copies of the Qur'án, which he did in order that the new text should have no rival. Thus to political animosity and to tribal jealousy was now added religious intolerance. A crisis was at hand and 'Uthmán had neither the wisdom nor the strength to meet it.

So serious did matters now look that 'Alí was deputed by some of the principal men of Madína to represent to the Khalífa that some change must be made. 'Alí then addressed 'Uthmán thus: 'The people bid me speak to thee. Yet what can I say to thee—son-in-law of the Prophet and his bosom friend as thou wast. The path lieth plain before thee, but thine eyes are blind. If blood be once shed it will flow till the day of Judgment. Right will be blotted out and treason will rage like the foaming waves of the sea.' But it was of no avail. The Khalífa was displeased, declared that he had done his best, went straight to the Mosque and from the pulpit reproached the people for their ingratitude and for listening to evil-minded persons who sought only to defame him. So the discontent grew worse.

'Uthmán then summoned all the various Governors to Madína and issued a proclamation calling upon all objectors to come and substantiate their charges. The Governors came, but no accusers did. The men whom the Khalífa had sent through the provinces to report on the state of affairs gave in favourable reports. They advised him to treat the malcontents with severity, but to this he would not assent. It seemed like peace, but it was not. Mu'áwiya before he departed for Syria warned the Khalífa of the peril he was in and

begged him to leave Madína and retire to Syria where the people were loyal. ‘Uthmán replied: ‘Even to save my life I will not quit the land wherein the Prophet dwelt, nor the city in which his sacred person rests.’ Nor would he allow troops to be sent from the Syrian army for his defence.

Meanwhile the conspirators, during the absence of the local Governors, became very active and an expedition was organized amongst those who dwelt in ‘Iráq and in Egypt, to march upon Madína. Amongst the insurgents from Egypt was Muḥammad, son of Abú Bakr. This was in the year A.D. 656. At Madína they failed to get any redress of their grievances, but professed to be satisfied with a promise of reform. On their way back they intercepted a letter, bearing the Khalífa’s own seal, and addressed to the son of Abú Sarḥ, the Governor of Egypt.<sup>1</sup> In the letter instructions were given to put to death or to imprison the men who were giving this trouble to the Khalífa. They at once returned and, though the Khalífa denied all knowledge of the letter, they did not believe him and called upon him to resign, as unworthy of the Khalífate. The scene in the Mosque on the following Friday was a very tumultuous one. ‘Uthmán himself was struck by a stone and carried in a swoon to his house where he was soon besieged. Messengers were now sent off to the commanders in Syria, ‘Iráq and Egypt to hasten up troops. No time could be lost and so the conspir-

<sup>1</sup> This is Jalálu’d-dín as-Syúṭi’s account (p. 163) and he gives full particulars. See also Mas’údí, *Murúju’dh-Dhahab*, vol. iv, p. 278. Syed Amír ‘Alí (*Spirit of Islám*, p. 435) says it was sent to Mu’awiya; but this is only an instance of the Shí’ah bias with which this book is written. Muir says that the letter was being taken to Egypt.

ators stormed the palace. Muḥammad, the son of Abū Bakr, was the first to enter. ‘Uthmán said to him: ‘By God, Muḥammad, if thy father saw thee at this moment, he would blush with shame.’ Seizing the Khalífa by the beard he said: ‘Son of ‘Affán! what help to you now are ‘Abdu’lláh the apostate, Merwán the banished and Mu‘áwiya the accursed.’ The Khalífa looking calmly on him replied: ‘My son, if thy father Abū Bakr were alive, he would not be pleased to see my white beard in thy hand.’ Remorse seized on the young man and the intended blow did not fall. He went out of the room leaving his task undone. The others, however, had no such scruples and soon put the Khalífa to death. His wife Ná’ila, the daughter of Qarafiṣa, tried to intercept the blows, and her hand was cut off.<sup>1</sup> The blood of the wounded Khalífa fell on the page of the Qur’án he was reading at the verse, ‘God will suffice to protect thee against them, for He is the Hearer, the Knower.’ [Súratu’l-Baqara (ii) 131.] He was not buried near the Prophet, but in a cemetery outside the city where in after years many of his kinsmen were also buried. The attack on the palace was resisted, and ‘Alí, Zubair and Talḥa, all men of war and leaders of men, ostensibly aided in the defence. Whether they were hearty in it is matter of doubt, for so great was their influence that it is difficult to believe that they could not, had they so wished, have kept the besiegers at bay till succour,

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<sup>1</sup> So Mirkhond, *Raudatu’s-Safá*, Part ii, vol. iii, p. 184. Muir says, ‘Some of the fingers.’ Mas‘údí does not mention this and simply says that she cried out, ‘The Emir of the Believers is dead.’—Murúju’-dh-dhahab, vol. iv, p. 281.

now only three days journey off, arrived.<sup>1</sup> Indeed ‘Alī at one time returned to his own house and let matters take their course, and did not go back to the palace till the Khalīfa sent for him.

Ibn Asákir, quoted by Jalálu’d-dīn as-Syúṭī, says that the cause of discontent was the affection ‘Uthmán felt for his own family: ‘He appointed to office from among the Bani Umayyah those who had not enjoyed the companionship of the Prophet. Thus there were committed by his prefects those actions which the Companions of Muḥammad did not approve. ‘Uthmán favoured them and did not remove them..... he let none other share with them, nor enjoined on them the fear of the Lord.’ Mirkhond<sup>2</sup> quotes this statement of Sa’d binu’l-Musib concerning ‘Uthmán: ‘He perused the book of Alláh fully, and although he was brave when occasion required he would not countenance hostilities, lest the blood of Muslims be shed; after his death, however, the scimitar of rebelliousness having been drawn from the scabbard, victories came to an end and the distribution of booty was cut short.’ It is curious to note the statement about the loss of booty now that civil wars took the place of wars with

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<sup>1</sup> Muir says: ‘History cannot acquit them, if not of actual collusion with the insurgents, at least of cold-blooded indifference to their Khalīf’s fate.’—*The Early Khalīfate*, p. 337.

Syed Amīr ‘Alī, on the other hand, describes ‘Alī as trying to save ‘Uthmán at the last crisis, ‘by placing himself before the infuriated soldiery, and asking for consideration for the venerable though misguided Pontiff. He had nearly sacrificed his own sons in his endeavours to protect Osman.’ ( . . . . . ) *Spirit of Islām*, p. 435. ( . . . . . ) But the whole of this portion of the book may be called an apology for ‘Alī, who receives nothing but praise for all he does.

<sup>2</sup> *Rauḍatu’s-Safá*, Part ii, vol. iii, p. 185.

unbelievers. It shows how large a part the desire for booty played in the early Muslim conquests.

Twenty-four years had now passed by since the Prophet's death and, though factions had been formed and disputes which time could not settle had arisen, yet Islám had spread abroad in all directions and Muslim conquests in 'Irac, Syria and Egypt had been consolidated and confirmed. In Africa not only had a great advance along the northern coast been made, but the Muslims had shown that they could fight on the sea as well as on the land. This marvellous progress, greater than the wildest dreams of men in the lifetime of the Prophet, confirmed the Arabs in the verity of Islám and in the mighty power latent in the confession of the Unity. Had there been no jealousies and no tribal disputes, had Islám renovated the heart and life in the degree it regulated the outward conduct then it might have had, what as a State religion it has not had—power in days of peace and the hope of constitutional freedom and continued prosperity. 'But stronger to divide and rend asunder than the new creed was to unite, were the old deep-rooted and long enduring family jealousies of the Arabs, the old tribal feuds which had been stilled for the time only by the brilliant prospects of conquering a world. The moment the tide of conquest was stayed they asserted themselves in all their [pristine vigour.]<sup>1</sup> This disintegrating force 'Uthmán could not resist or control, and thus evils grew apace in the reign of this third of the Khulafá ar-Ráshidún.

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<sup>1</sup> Osborn, *Islám under the Arabs*, p. 99.

## ‘ALÍ

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FOR some days after the death of ‘Uthmán nothing was done. The insurgents were in power but, at length, they insisted on the election of a Khalífa before they returned to the places from whence they had come. They requested ‘Alí ‘to adorn the masnad of the Khalífate with his own august person, to irrigate and to refresh the gardens of the hopes of the subjects with abundant showers from the clouds of his mercy and beneficence’.<sup>1</sup> ‘Alí replied that the choice must rest with the men who had fought at Badr. They then assisted in the deliberations and elected him. ‘Alí, a nephew of Muḥammad who was then appointed, was born about the year A.D. 600, and when five or six years old was adopted by the Prophet. He was one of the earliest converts to Islām, and so from his childhood was under the direct teaching and influence of Muḥammad, whose daughter Fátima he married after the battle of Badr. When Muḥammad finally left Mecca for Madína, ‘Alí remained behind for some days

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<sup>1</sup> *Raudatu’s-Şafá*, Part ii, vol. iii, p. 187.

to settle some business affairs. The families of Muḥammad and of Abú Bakr also remained for some time.<sup>1</sup> On arrival at Madína 'Alí resided with the Prophet and was in constant attendance on him in all his war-like expeditions, except the campaign of Tabúk, when he was left in charge of his leader's family. At Badr he distinguished himself in single combats and at Uḥud received sixteen wounds. He was a brave soldier and skilful warrior. When the first pilgrimage to Mecca was made in the ninth year of the Hijra, 'Alí was commissioned to recite the opening verses of the ninth Súra, by which Muḥammad declared that he was, after the expiration of four months, free from any obligation to keep peace with the pagan Arabs. Muḥammad took 'Alí with him the next year when he made the pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and it was on 'Alí's arm he leaned during his last illness. Thus, during all the varied phases of the Prophet's career, in peace and in war, 'Alí had been his constant companion, his devoted and brave disciple. There are many traditions which record the high esteem and affection Muḥammad felt for him. It is from some of these, such as: 'I and 'Alí are one of stock; 'Alí is a part of me and I of 'Alí,' that the doctrine of the 'divine right'

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<sup>1</sup> There was no attempt to detain them, nor do they seem to have been maltreated in any way. Maulavi Cherágh 'Alí, seeking to defend the aggressive raids of the Muslims at Madína says that the Meccans 'maltreated the children and weak Muslims left at Mecca' and that war was necessary 'to rescue their families.' *Critical Exposition of Jihád*, p. 10. As a matter of fact, the Muslims made, at first, unprovoked attacks on mercantile caravans belonging to Meccan merchants, who had to fight in defence of their commerce. See my *Islám: its Rise and Progress* (second ed.) p. 28.



of ‘Alí and his family grew. As this theory came into conflict with the principle of popular election, which had been followed in the appointment of the preceding Khalífas, and indeed in his own case also, the breach between the opposing parties in Islám was widened more and more, and the schism has never been healed. Immediately after his accession earnest requests were made to ‘Alí to cause the murderers of ‘Uthmán to be punished. His two friends Ṭalḥa and Zubair begged him to take action in this matter; but, either through fear or through the hesitancy which so marked his rule, he put it off and said: ‘Let us wait and the Lord will guide us.’ We have seen that ‘Uthmán put many of his own friends and followers into positions of importance. ‘Alí’s first act was to take steps to supersede them. As this promptitude was in such strange contrast to the dilatoriness shown in punishing the regicides, his enemies naturally put a bad construction on it and found in it a valid reason for opposition to him. Many of his friends begged him to allow Mu‘áwiya to remain in his high command in Syria; they pointed out to him that this appointment had been made by the Khalífa ‘Umar and not by ‘Uthmán. But he was obstinate and declared that he would not keep him for a day.<sup>1</sup> In vain did they

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Alí’s hatred of Mu‘áwiya may have been due to the fact that he was the son of ‘Abú Sufyán, a determined opponent of the Prophet, the Quraish leader at the battles of Badr and of Uḥud, who accepted Islám very late in life and only when he saw resistance was hopeless. ‘Ibn Abbás warned ‘Alí that his opposition to Mu‘áwiya would lead people to say that he had connived at the murder of ‘Uthmán. ‘Alí replied that as he now had the power he would not be lenient to them—*Raudatu’s-Safa*, Part ii, vol. iii, p. 190-1.

urge that the best of all ways to keep the Syrians quiet was to support Mu'áwiya, a most popular commander. They wisely urged that it was not at all likely that he, the nominee of one Khalifa and the friend of another, would take quietly his dismissal by a third. 'Alí continued obstinate and made one of the great mistakes of his reign.

In Baṣra and in Egypt the people resented this sudden change of officials, and 'Alí's envoys were, in some cases, roughly treated and sent back to Madína. In Syria the murder of 'Uthmán had been very deeply felt. If 'Alí had promptly punished the assassins he would have won the allegiance of the Muslims in Syria; but he missed his opportunity and turned men who might have been loyal adherents into disloyal enemies. The result was that when his letter to Mu'áwiya superseding him reached Damascus the opponents of 'Alí were ripe for revolt. They saw the bloody shirt of 'Uthmán and the mangled hand of Ná'ila hanging from the pulpit of the great Mosque, and with these memorials of the departed Khalifa before them, they were not inclined to render obedience to a ruler who refused to punish the perpetrators of so dire a crime. So the only reply that 'Alí received was a blank sheet of paper, with the words 'From Mu'áwiya to 'Alí' written on the cover. The men of Madína saw that this meant war. 'Alí now became active. Orders were given to collect troops and to prepare to take the field.

Zubair and Ṭalḥa, who were probably disappointed at having been passed over when the election to the Khalífate took place, declined to go and said they

wished to make the lesser pilgrimage to Mecca. ‘Alí saw that their real intention was to go to Baṣra or to Syria and told them so; but they swore that he was mistaken.<sup>1</sup> He was right in his surmise, for in Mecca they found men anxious to punish the murderers of ‘Uthmán. They joined them and then proceeded to Baṣra where the standard of rebellion was already raised. The Governor of Baṣra, though the inhabitants were divided in opinion, would not give place to Zubair and Ṭalḥa, for he considered that they had broken the oath of allegiance which they had taken to ‘Alí. They replied that they had taken it under compulsion. A messenger was sent to Madína to ascertain the facts of the case, and there he was told that their statements were true. It was unfortunate that ‘Alí was absent, for he could have given more correct information. This report satisfied many and they had now no hesitation in capturing Baṣra. ‘Āyesha, who throughout seems to have been a bitter enemy to ‘Alí, urged the men of Kúfa also to rebel. All this was sad news for ‘Alí, but he at once put off the Syrian expedition and hastened with an army towards Madína to crush this revolt before it spread. Communications were entered into with ‘Āyesha, Zubair and Ṭalḥa. The one request was ‘punish the murderers of ‘Uthmán;’ but this was the one thing ‘Alí would not, or could not, or thought he could not do. It is true that many of the late insurgents were now in his camp, and he had not the courage to face their wrath, should any attempt

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<sup>1</sup> Mas‘ūdī, *Murūju’dh-Dhahab*, vol. iv, p. 313.

to punish them be made.<sup>1</sup> The murderers of 'Uthmán were uneasy during these negotiations, and so they determined to precipitate matters by making a sudden attack on the camp of 'Āyesha.<sup>2</sup> The battle soon became general and is of some note, as being the first in which Muslim met Muslim in deadly array. It is known as the Battle of the Camel, for 'Āyesha was present mounted on one. 'Āyesha from within her camel litter urged her men to fight and round her they rallied again and again; but at last had to give way. It is said that ten thousand lives were lost in this one engagement. The loss of Zubair and Ṭalḥa, who were both killed, was great, for, though now opposed to 'Alí, they were members of the Quraish and had for years been his friends and might, therefore, have been won back to a loyal obedience. On the other hand, it made the way for Mu'āwiya much plainer and easier, as it removed by death two possible claimants of the Khalífate. 'Alí behaved very generously to 'Āyesha after the battle and allowed her to retire to Madína, where she lived on for many years and did not again interfere in political affairs. The treasure found at Baṣra was divided amongst the victorious soldiers. 'Alí now very unwisely determined

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<sup>1</sup> Mastúdí records a prayer made by 'Alí, before the battle, of which the following is the purport: 'O Lord of heaven and earth, Lord of the High Throne, I pray Thee to make this city of Baṣra favourable and to turn away from me its sorceries: protect my sojourn in that city. Thou knowest, Lord, it has revolted against me, forgotten my authority and violated its oath. Meanwhile spare the life of Muslims, raise up among them those who will implore Thy aid to stop the effusion of blood.'

<sup>2</sup> *Mirkhund, Raudatu's-Ṣafá*, Part ii, vol. iii, p. 216.

to make Kúfa the seat of his government, for though the inhabitants of that city bitterly hated the Syrian party, they were a quarrelsome fickle set of people, as his family afterwards learnt by a bitter experience.

In Egypt the condition of affairs was very adverse to ‘Alí. The first Governor he sent was removed by intrigue and the next one was poisoned, and ten thousand men took a solemn oath that they would avenge the death of ‘Uthmán. ‘Amr bin al-‘Áṣ was at this time with Mu‘áwiya, to whom he offered his services, if some share in the spoil were given to him. ‘Egypt,’ said ‘Amr, ‘is the morsel I covet.’<sup>1</sup> Mu‘áwiya placed at his disposal five thousand Syrian troops, with whom he entered Fustát in July A.D. 658. ‘Egypt was thus lost to ‘Alí.

The interest now centres in the Syrian campaign where Mu‘áwiya held the field as a competitor for the Khalífate. The conflict was bound to be severe and the result decisive, for as yet the idea of a divided Khalífate had not entered into the Muslim mind. ‘Alí gathered together an army of fifty thousand men for the invasion of Syria. From Kúfa he wrote again to Mu‘áwiya and told him that the Muhájirún and the Anṣár had proclaimed him Khalífa, that Zubair and Ṭalḥa also, who had so recently opposed him, were now both killed, and so he called once more on him to submit. It was useless. The messenger returned and related how the people rallied round Mu‘áwiya and how war must go on to the bitter end.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mas‘údi, *Muríju’dh-Dhahab*, vol. iv, p. 298.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 339-340.

According to some accounts 'Alí had ninety thousand men and Mu'áwiya forty-five thousand; other writers put each side down at eighty thousand; and yet others at fifty thousand each. Mu'áwiya was the first in the field, an open spacious plain on the banks of the Euphrates. The river made any frontal attack on his camp very difficult. It was guarded by a large body of troops. 'Alí had to encamp in the desert, where his men suffered much from the heat and from thirst. He, therefore, ordered forty thousand men to advance. He thus forced Mu'áwiya to change his position and to occupy the field of Siffin, which place gives its name to the impending battle. For more than a month small indecisive actions were fought. 'Alí appealed to the Syrian army thus: 'I beseech you by the divine name to rally to me. To you all equally is the verse addressed, "God guideth not the machinations of deceivers"'—[Súratu Yúsuf (xii) 52]. But they replied, 'Only the sword can decide between us: the feeblest must perish.'<sup>1</sup> A general engagement was now forced on. Ibn 'Abbás says that 'Alí had on a white turban, and jets of flame shot out from his eyes. He fought with the utmost bravery and riding on a grey mule he passed along the line of troops and said: 'Sacrifice yourselves, God Most High sees you and the nephew of the Prophet fights with you. Charge without ceasing and fear to retreat, for flight means shame for your descendants and eternal fire for you in the day of judgment.' Every time he struck a blow he said, 'Alláhu Akbar!' (God is

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<sup>1</sup> Mas'údi, *Murúju'dh-Dhahab*, vol. iv, p. 350.

great!) ‘Alí was ably seconded by his generals and on the third morning the Syrian troops were driven back. It seemed to Mu‘áwiya as if the battle was lost, when a cunning device entirely changed the situation. ‘Amr, knowing the fanatical character of the men of Kúfa and Bašra, directed some of the Syrian soldiers to advance to the front, bearing copies of the Qur‘án on the tops of their lances and to shout: ‘The law of the Lord, let it decide between us.’ ‘Let the blood of the Faithful cease to flow; if the Syrian army be destroyed, who will defend the frontier against the Greeks? if the army of ‘Iráq should perish, who will defend the frontier against the Turks and the Persians?’<sup>1</sup> In vain did ‘Alí point out that this was a mere device to avoid defeat. His men would not listen to him; they were fanatics and loved a theological dispute even better than fighting. They forced him to yield and to submit to the arbitration of the Book. ‘Alí was furious, but nothing he could say or do would satisfy his men; and he had, at last, to consent to the appointment of two arbitrators, one for each side: ‘Amr for the Syrian Army, Abú Músa for ‘Alí’s side. Thus the battle of Siffin so nearly won was practically lost, and ‘Alí returned to Kúfa in a worse position than when he had left it. Strange to say, the spirit of controversy ran so high in ‘Alí’s army that now some men denounced the idea of arbitration as contrary to the theocratic idea. The Lord alone should be their ruler and not any man appointed by

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<sup>1</sup> The Muslim historians, Mirkhund, Mas‘údi and others give full details of this stratagem.

arbitrators of contending forces. It is possible that a general distrust of the Quraish may have added political force to theological views. Anyhow, twelve thousand men deserted the army and on arrival at Kúfa took up a separate encampment. They are known as the Khárijites—those who went out. This added very much to the troubles of the Khalífa, for the men of Kúfa refused to be left unguarded with such fanatics in their neighbourhood, so 'Alí had to attack them in order to prevent the outrages they were committing day by day. They were defeated, but they still kept alive a spirit of disaffection, and for many a long year were a constant source of trouble in Islám. About six months after the battle of Siffin the arbitrators met to give their decision. 'Amr was much too astute for Abú Músa, and soon led him on in conversation to admit that 'Uthmán was a true believer who had been unjustly killed, that 'Alí had not punished his murderers, and that he knew of no one more capable of revenging 'Uthmán's death than Mu'áwiya; but he objected to vote for him, for not only were there relations of 'Uthmán with a better claim, but also such a choice would fail to bring unity to Islám. Finally, they both agreed that neither claimant should be appointed.<sup>1</sup>

'Amr proposed various names, but Abú Músa rejected them all, for he wished to appoint 'Abdu'lláh, son of the Khalífa 'Umar. Then said 'Amr, 'If Syria accepts him and 'Iráq rejects him, or if the contrary

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<sup>1</sup> A very full account of the debate is given in Mas'údi's *Murúju'dh-Dhahab*, vol. iv, pp. 396–402.



should happen, wouldst thou make war on the party rejecting him?’ ‘No,’ replied Abú Músa. Then added ‘Amr, ‘Rise up, address the people, withdraw the names of our two candidates, and then name him whom thou wishest to appoint.’ Abú Músa then rose, and after praising God said: ‘Musalmáns, after looking into this matter, we consider the best way of securing peace and concord and of stopping the effusion of blood is to withdraw the names of ‘Alí and of Mu‘áwiya: so I depose ‘Alí as I cast off this turban’<sup>1</sup> which he then cast away. He continued: ‘We appoint as Khalífa a man whose father as well as he himself was a Companion of the Prophet—this man is ‘Abdu’lláh, son of ‘Umar.’ He then bore witness to his good qualities in order to gain the sympathy of the assembly. ‘Amr then rose up, and said ‘Abú Músa has deposed ‘Alí and he knows the matter well. I, on my part, also depose ‘Alí; but I proclaim Mu‘áwiya as my chief and yours.’ He then called upon the assembly to take the oath of allegiance to Mu‘áwiya, on condition that he avenged the death of ‘Uthmán. The people were astounded, for no one ever thought that such a trick would be played. Abú Músa, blamed by his party and vexed with the result of his action, retired to Mecca. ‘Amr returned to Damascus and saluted Mu‘áwiya as Khalífa. ‘Alí and his party naturally refused to accept the decision as valid, and so Islám now saw the spectacle of two rival Khalífas,

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<sup>1</sup> This is the statement of Mas‘údi; but Mirkhúnd says: ‘Then taking his ring from off his finger he said: “As I have removed this ring from my finger, so I remove ‘Alí and Mu‘áwiya from the Khalifate.”’ *Raudatu’s-Safá*, Part ii, vol. iii, p. 358.

the one cursed from all the pulpits of 'Iráq, the other in all the Mosques of Syria.

Mu'áwiya, having now the Muslims in Syria and in Egypt on his side, began to take the offensive and to claim for himself the allegiance of all the Faithful. Madína and Mecca submitted to his rule and only the eastern provinces were left in the possession of the unfortunate 'Alí. A truce was made in the year A.D. 660, by which the two leaders agreed to cease hostilities and to accept the present division of territories. The Khárijites were sorely vexed at this, for it seemed to them that now the Government of men who had departed from the theocratic ideal would be rendered firm, and that ungodly kingdoms would block the way of the kingdom of righteousness. If this was to be so then they had shed their blood in vain. Three men met together and said to another: 'Let us each kill one of the three oppressors of the Faith. Islám may yet be free, and the reign of the Lord appear.' They dipped their swords in poison, and each went his way, to Egypt, Damascus and Kúfa. The victims were to be 'Amr, Mu'áwiya and 'Alí. At Fustát, 'Amr was absent from the Mosque on the day the conspirator arrived there and another man was murdered by mistake. At Damascus, Mu'áwiya was struck, but the blow was not fatal. At Kúfa, 'Alí was severely wounded as he entered the Mosque. He was taken to his house and died soon after. Thus, on January 25th, A.D. 661, passed away the first of the converts to Islám, the beloved son-in-law and nephew of the Prophet.

The troubles through which 'Alí had to pass and his striking personality have drawn out the sympathy

of historians towards him. Even Major Osborn, a writer not too lavish of praise for any Muslim ruler, calls him ‘the Bayard of Islám—a soldier without fear and without reproach,’ and writing of his assassination says: ‘With him perished the truest-hearted and best Moslem of whom Muḥammadan history has preserved the remembrance.’ The Shí‘ah historians are naturally biassed, and, as the cult of ‘Alí grew, impartial opinions are not to be found in their writings.

The influence of ‘Alí on Eastern religious thought has been great. The doctrine of his ‘divine right’ has led to the great division of the Muḥammadan world into the Sunnī and the Shí‘ah sects. The latter believe that the Imámat, or the leadership of true Muslims, is confined to ‘Alí and his successors in office. His tragic end and the sorrows and sufferings of his family appealed to the sympathy of many early Muslims. Traditional accounts have come down showing the deep reverence they entertained for ‘Alí, and the virtues they ascribed to him. In the verse, ‘now hath a light (núr) and a clear book (Qur‘án) come to you from God,’<sup>1</sup> the Shí‘ahs see a reference to the dignity of ‘Alí. The ‘light’ is said to be the Núr-i-Muḥammadi or light of Muḥammad.<sup>2</sup> It is believed that God took a ray of light from the splendour of His own glory and united it to the body of Muḥammad, from whom it passed on to ‘Alí, and then through him to the Imáms, his successors. This unique privilege places

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<sup>1</sup> Súratu’l-Má‘ida (v) 18.

<sup>2</sup> This idea of a ray of divine light is borrowed from the Zoroastrian religion. For further details about it, see *Faith of Islám* (3rd ed.), pp. 110-111.

both him and them very high in the estimation of all Shí'ahs, by whom they are looked upon as the divinely appointed mediums between God and man. Thus to these early Muslims the possession of an infallible book was not enough; their restless hearts longed for a living, personal guide, and so it came to pass that to 'Alí and the Imáms almost supernatural gifts have been accorded and almost divine worship has been paid. The question of the Imámat soon led to a great division amongst the Shí'ahs which resulted in the formation of the two great parties, the Imámities and the Ismá'ílians. From the teaching of the latter sect an esoteric system arose which eventually found a place in the religion of the Druses.<sup>1</sup> The cult of 'Alí has, however, found a still fuller expression amongst the Nosairis, or the Ansariyah, a small sect to be found in parts of Syria.<sup>2</sup> They reverse the Shí'ah order and say that the 'divine light' came from 'Alí to Muḥammad. Shabrastáni says that the Nosairis have carried to exaggeration the veneration of 'Alí and that they consider him to be a 'portion of God' (fihu juzwan Ilián).<sup>3</sup> In more recent times the cult of 'Alí has found a place in the inception of the Bábí religion. The doctrine of the Imámat lies at the basis of Bábíism though it has in its development there found other forms. The influence of 'Alí has thus been very far-reaching. It has entered into various forms of religious

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<sup>1</sup> Sell, *Essays on Islám*, pp. 148, 158-9.

<sup>2</sup> An account of this curious sect will be found in René Dussard's *Histoire et Religion des Nosairis*.

<sup>3</sup> Shabrastáni, *al-Milal wa'n-Nihal*, p. 143.

belief and has in some found a strange development. It is a subject of the deepest interest, but I must not now enter any further into it.

Whatever may have been his personal qualities in private life, ‘Alí lacked the qualities requisite for a ruler in the troublesome times in which his lot was cast. Something, however, may be said for his great rival, Mu‘áwiya. It is true that his father Abú Súfyán had led the Meccans against Muḥammad at the battles of Badr and of Uḥud; but, after all, he did become a Muslim, though somewhat late in life and not till he saw further opposition was useless. His son cannot be held responsible for his father’s defence of Meccan rights against Muḥammad and the men of the rival city of Madína. Moreover he had been quite properly appointed by the Khalífa ‘Umar to his high post in Syria. He was an able man who commanded the respect and had won the attachment of his troops. It is difficult to see how he was wrong in calling for punishment on the murderers of ‘Uthmán. Still, he had no claim to the Khalífate beyond his apparent fitness for it. On the other hand, ‘Alí also had no inherent claim, for the doctrine of ‘divine right’ which looks on Abú Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmán as usurpers had not yet been accepted when ‘Uthmán died. The murderers of that Khalífa proclaimed ‘Alí as his successor, but to be so proclaimed was a doubtful honour. What ‘Alí had in his favour was that he had been so long associated with Muḥammad, had been his most devoted follower, and was connected with him by close ties of relationship. Still these were not grounds which conferred any absolute legal right on him. In

other words, it was quite open to the faithful to have chosen Mu'áwiya, Talha or Zubair instead.

After the election, Mu'áwiya's position was, it is true, different; but the point is that it is by no means clear that he would have given any trouble if 'Alí had not dismissed him from office. When to the utter neglect to punish the assassins of 'Uthmán and their party was added the degradation of all who called for justice, there was some justification for a revolt against 'Alí. If, then, Mu'áwiya may be described as an astute intriguing man, he may also be represented as a man deeply injured by the treatment he received, who was right in calling upon the Muslim world to see how the Khalifa neglected one of the first duties of a ruler and failed to punish the base crime of murder. Appointed by one Khalifa, respected by a second, Mu'áwiya naturally objected to summary dismissal by a third one. Thus we can understand, even though we may not approve all that Mu'áwiya did. He scarcely deserves all the bad names by which he has been called. Ruin came rather by the supineness and want of tact which 'Alí displayed than by the cunning and fraud of Mu'áwiya.

Still the schism which arose worked untold evil in Islám and led to many long years of misery for the Arab people; and so, to whichever side the greater blame must be attached, the result is to be regretted. Had 'Alí's lot been cast in less turbulent times he might have been a worthy ruler, but so it was not. Thus within thirty years after the Prophet passed away, three out of his four successors met with a violent death, one through private revenge and two from

political causes. Islám had spread marvellously, but in spite of its foreign conquests and notwithstanding that it had won all the Arab tribes to belief in itself, it utterly failed to bring peace and comfort. Internecine war, bloodshed and misery were the earliest things it brought to the unhappy Arab people, and so it has been since. With a few notable exceptions, its march through the world has been accompanied by war and its evils. Had Abú Bakr's policy of thoroughly consolidating the Arab people before interfering with other nations been followed, the expansion of Islám might have been more peaceable, if slower, and the terrible conflicts of the years immediately succeeding his reign might have been avoided; but whether he could have restrained, if he had lived longer, the innate love of the Bedouin for war and plunder is perhaps doubtful. Anyhow his successors did not, and the sad lot of 'Alí was a natural result. The history of the Khulafá ar-Ráshidún, the four right-guided Khalifas of orthodox Islám, has proved to be a prophetic illustration of what was hereafter to follow amongst diverse peoples in many lands and during long periods of time.

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